

STRIVING FOR ZERO EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Striving
for
Zero

INTERVENTIONS (AFTER A SUICIDE ATTEMPT)

Caring Card Initiative

Marin County

The Caring Cards Initiative provides handwritten messages of hope for patients and clients who are recovering from mental health, suicidality, substance use or other behavioral health issues. All cards feature student artwork from an annual art & film showcase and include resources for help. Caring Cards is a strategy to reinforce support and recovery following discharge from a treatment program, psychiatric unit, support group, etc.



ABOUT THE YOUTH ACTION TEAM

The Marin County Suicide Prevention Collaborative partners with [Marin 9 to 25](#) and [Marin County Youth Commission](#) in fostering the Youth Action Team's engagement in County-wide youth mental health and well-being, suicide prevention and substance use awareness activities. Youth partnerships with the Marin County Office of Education, the [Marin Schools Wellness Collaborative](#), [OD Free Marin](#), and other Community-Based Organizations in Marin are critical for their success. This Team is designed for youth ages 13-25 years old.

TRAINING COMPONENT

The Youth Action Team has developed a digital training (in both English and Spanish) that all card writers review before writing. The training includes information about stigma, how to write a supportive message, and the importance of including resources. The card writing gives writers tools and skills to think about others who are struggling in a compassionate and caring way.

EXAMPLE OF A CARING CARD

Each card contains a handwritten message (English or Spanish) with resources on the back.

Dear Neighbor,

I know that things may be hard right now and you may wonder if you'll ever feel better. We are stronger than we think sometimes. I believe in you and you must believe in yourself too.

Warmly,

Your Caring Friend

Dear Neighbor,

I know this work is hard. Always have hope and believe that your recovery is possible. If someone gives you help, please take it! Don't listen to the stigma of mental illness. Participate in your treatment and please reach out to the numbers on the back.

Love,

A Caring Person

OUTCOME

The program has grown over the past three years, with a 30% increase this year (2023-24) in the number of participants writing cards and the number to be given out to service providers. Currently, a total of 25 schools and organizations are participating in writing 3000 cards to go to partners such as Side by Side, National Alliance for Mental Illness, MarinHealth, Buckelew Programs, Kaiser, Veteran's Affairs, and Marin County Jail.



SCAN ME TO PLAY
SHORT TRAINING!

HISTORY AND RATIONALE

In 2020, the [Suicide Prevention Collaborative Youth Action Team](#) identified a strategy to support follow up for those in distress and recovery. In a survey by For Like Minds, it reported that more than 80% of former psychiatric unit patients said receiving a "get well soon" card would have helped their recovery. The team imagined how a person on their own might be feeling after experiencing mental health distress or even a suicide attempt—such as shame, embarrassment, anger, - and then going home to family, school, or community. The students created a project designed to foster belonging, acceptance and connection for those community members as they progressed in their mental health or substance use recovery.

